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SPECIAL MEETING MARCH 6, 2003

The Wethersfield Town Council held a Special Meeting on Thursday, March 6, 2003 at 8:15 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Town Hall.

Present: Councilors Cascio, Fitzpatrick, Flynn, Gardow, Hemmann, Morin, Sassano, Deputy Mayor O'Connor and Chairperson Czernicki.

Also present: Roy Pinette, Director of Human Resources, Interim Town Manager Joseph Swetcky and Town Clerk Dolores G. Sassano.

Chairperson Czernicki called the meeting to order and stated that the purpose of the meeting was to vote on the hiring of Wethersfield's new Town Manager.

Ms. Bonnie Therrien has been the Town Manager of Berlin, Connecticut since 1996, and has had a distinguished public administration career that spans eighteen years in various municipal government management positions that include Berlin, Enfield and Hartford. She has considerable expertise dealing with financial management, budget preparation/implementation, personnel administration, and economic development.

Ms. Therrien was chosen from an original applicant pool of sixty which was reduced to six candidates. She prides herself on her openness and participatory style of communication with employees and citizens. She is certified as a Professional Manager through the International City and County Management Association. Miss Therrien was the Berlin Chamber of Commerce Person of the Year in 1999. She won the YWCA Women in Leadership Award in 2001.

COUNCIL ACTION

Deputy Mayor O'Connor moved "**TO APPOINT BONNIE L. THERRIEN AS THE TOWN MANAGER OF WETHERSFIELD**" seconded by Councilor Fitzpatrick.

Councilor Sassano wished to congratulate Ms. Therrien and welcome her to Wethersfield and wished her luck in her task ahead.

Councilor Cascio welcomed Ms. Therrien to Wethersfield and complimented her on her directness, honesty and integrity. He believes she is someone who will get the job done and will continue with the momentum on Wethersfield's various current projects. He looks forward to working with her.

Deputy Mayor O'Connor said that the Council has not only high hopes but also high expectations. He looks forward to working with Ms. Therrien as she helps take Wethersfield to the next level. He also pointed out that Ms. Therrien is the first female Town Manager that Wethersfield has ever had.

The motion was approved by the following roll call vote:

In Favor	Opposed
Councilor Cascio	Councilor Flynn
Councilor Fitzpatrick	Councilor Morin
Councilor Gardow	
Councilor Hemmann	
Councilor Sassano	

Deputy Mayor O'Connor
Chairperson Czernicki

The motion passed 7-2-0.

Ms. Therrien said that she looks forward to working with everyone on the Council. She believes that there is a team effort with the Council, Town Staff and the citizens. She has an open door policy and excited about Wethersfield.

Chairperson Czernicki said that Ms. Therrien will start her position as the new Town Manager on April 21, 2003.

Councilor Cascio moved **"TO AMEND THE NEPOTISM RULE ADOPTED AS PART OF THE PERSONNEL RULES IN AUGUST 2001"** seconded by Deputy Mayor O'Connor.

Councilor Cascio proposed the change to read in the following manner:

"For purposes of this section, "relative" means spouse, child, stepchild, parent, grandparent, grandchild, brother, sister, half-brother, half-sister or parent-in-law. In addition to the familial relationships set forth above, employees residing in the same household in a personal relationship or association, the nature of which, in the employer's judgment, would lead to favoritism, are also prohibited in employment and promotion decisions."

Councilor Flynn asked if the language read would be the amended language. Councilor Cascio said that it would be.

Councilor Fitzpatrick said that this needs to be looked at more closely. Council needs to investigate further what the changes are and why they came about. He has a difficult time changing policy on such short notice. He will make a motion to table the amending of the rules.

Councilor Cascio said that this is merely a clarification of the current language in the personnel policies. This is so that Council will be in compliance with the policy currently in force.

Councilor Flynn asked Councilor Cascio if language is being added or if it is being deleted. Councilor Cascio deferred this question to the Mayor.

Chairperson Czernicki said that this amendment would remove a particular clause and clarify areas not clear in regard to grandfathered or superceded in past contracts.

Councilor Flynn asked what those areas are. Chairperson Czernicki said they have to do with the relationship of brother-in-law and sister-in-law.

Councilor Fitzpatrick asked if Wethersfield's Personnel Director, Roy Pinette, is available for questions and asked him the purpose of the amendment.

Mr. Pinette referred the question to the Mayor.

Councilor Sassano said that prior to 2001 the personnel rules in regard to nepotism defined such as being a member of the immediate family. When the rules regarding nepotism were updated, Mr. Pinette sought counsel from UCONN to help update the regulations to include the categories stated in this amendment. Councilor Sassano believes this to be outrageous. At this stage of the game, Council is attempting to remove the relationship of brother-in-law so that one of the candidates for Police Chief can now be qualified.

Councilor Cascio stated that that is not the case. He wants to update the personnel rules so that they are in compliance with what is currently being done in Wethersfield.

Chairperson Czernicki said that the Personnel Committee met in July, 2001 to review/revise the personnel rules. The revised rules were sent to department heads and union stewards. They had opportunity to comment and no one commented; however the change in the personnel rules has left the town in situations where we are non-compliant

with our own nepotism rules. She looks at this amendment as a way to get Wethersfield out of non-compliance with at least one situation. Should this motion be tabled, it would give Council the opportunity to look at every situation where non-compliance is possible.

Councilor Fitzpatrick stated that personnel is something that Council needs to be very careful with when they deal with it. He asked Mr. Pinette why, when the rules were revised, they weren't reviewed with department heads.

Mr. Pinette said that the personnel rules hadn't been updated for ten years prior to this newest revision. In July, 2001 the Town was involved with the UCONN Masters of Public Administration Program and entered into a partnership with one of the classes to do a research project for Wethersfield to look at personnel policy issues. They researched the law, looked at common practices in State and Federal government, looked at policies of other communities and gave Wethersfield approximately fifteen policy recommendations which were incorporated into the personnel rules. The personnel rules were given to department heads for review and also to Wethersfield's labor attorney. Several meetings were held with department heads and each section was discussed. The only change made to the nepotism portion was the cohabitation issue. Copies were then given to the union presidents from whom no comments were received. The Town Manager approved the revised rules which then went to Council, in August 2001, who approved them as well.

Councilor Fitzpatrick asked should the policy rules change in the future, would employees not be grandfathered into the old rules. Mr. Pinette said that the rules would need to explicitly state that the rule is grandfathered. Councilor Fitzpatrick has serious reservations dealing with this in this style.

Councilor Morin understands what this is for and will move along with it.

Councilor Gardow asked Mr. Pinette about the process of changing the rules. Department heads reviewed the new rules; however were they asked to apply the rules to their staff as of that day? Mr. Pinette said that they were not. Councilor Gardow asked why they weren't. Mr. Pinette said that they were asked to review the rules and report what impact they would have on their department once implemented. Mr. Pinette received no notice from any department head that there would be non-compliance. Councilor Gardow understands that the rule needs to be changed for housekeeping purposes, but has the same reservations as Councilor Fitzpatrick. He also recommends tabling this motion. There needs to be more discussion.

Chairperson Czernicki asked Mr. Pinette to clarify how the language that specifically addresses grandfathering would be implemented. Mr. Pinette said that the rules currently standing are the rules implemented to all employees unless there is a specific grandfather clause. Chairperson Czernicki asked Mr. Pinette how he suggests the non-compliance issues be addressed without changing the rules. Mr. Pinette said that staff transfers need to be made. Mr. Pinette said that to implement this would require discussion with Interim Town Manager Swetcky.

The motion was approved by the following roll call vote:

In Favor	Opposed
Councilor Cascio	Councilor Fitzpatrick
Councilor Flynn	Councilor Gardow
Councilor Hemmann	Councilor Sassano
Councilor Morin	
Deputy Mayor O'Connor	
Chairperson Czernicki	

The motion passed 6-3-0.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:50 p.m. Deputy Mayor O'Conner moved "**TO ADJOURN THE SPECIAL MEETING**" seconded by Councilor Flynn. All Councilors present including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano
Town Clerk